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SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/PPC, AND DRL/PHD  
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAM AND DCHA/DG

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SUBJECT: HONDURAN CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE IS MURDERED; POLICE DO NOT THINK MURDER IS RELATED TO POLITICS

¶1. Ovidio Amaya Avelar, a 75 year-old National Party candidate for Congress, was shot to death on April 22 in La Arada, Santa Barbara, 2005. His neighbor who was traveling in the same car was also killed. The victim's cousin, also in the vehicle, was wounded and is in serious condition at the Santa Barbara hospital. The three men were driving from Santa Barbara when Amaya stopped the car to drop off an unidentified man they had given a ride. Before leaving the scene, the unidentified man made his way around the car to the driver's side and proceeded to shoot Amaya twice in the head, Amaya's neighbor in the face, and Amaya's cousin in the abdomen as he fled the car. A few minutes after the shooting, an Amaya family member happened to drive by and proceeded to take Amaya and his cousin to the hospital in Santa Barbara. Amaya died on the way. Amaya is a former mayor, coffee farmer, and landowner.

¶2. The municipal coordinator for the General Direction of Criminal Investigations (DGIC) said that the murderer was riding with the victims in the car, possibly faking being disabled, as he left crutches at the scene of the crime. The DGIC said they are considering two main hypotheses in this case: one is that the murder is linked to the murder of one of Amaya's sons in similar circumstances on the same highway in 1997, and the other is that the murder may have been ordered by one of Amaya's enemies from a long-standing dispute with other landowners in La Arada. The DGIC discounted the possibility that the murder may have been committed for political reasons related to the February 20 primary elections. No other information was released and the investigation in this case continues. Post has expressed USG interest in the case to Honduran police.

Palmer